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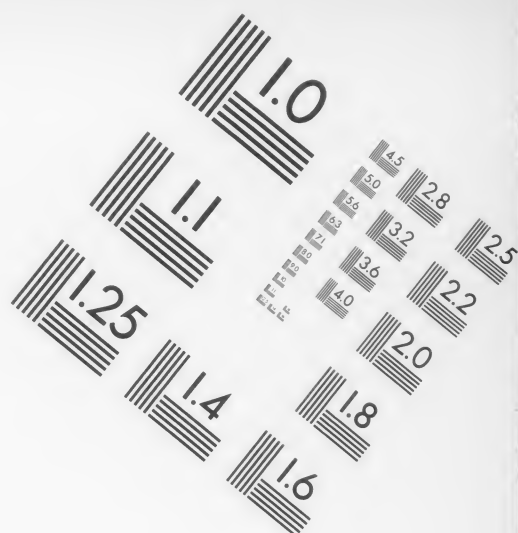
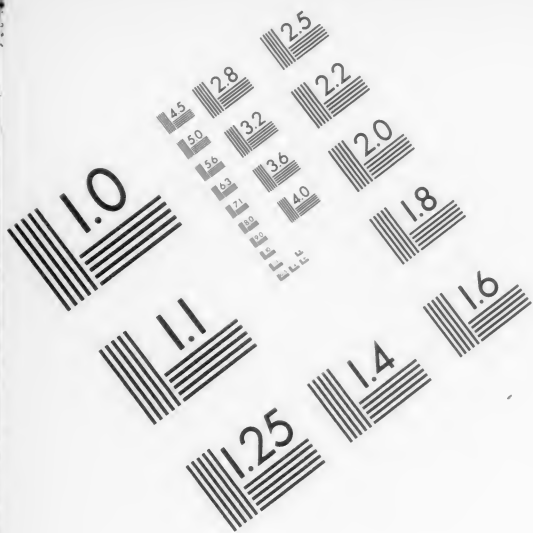
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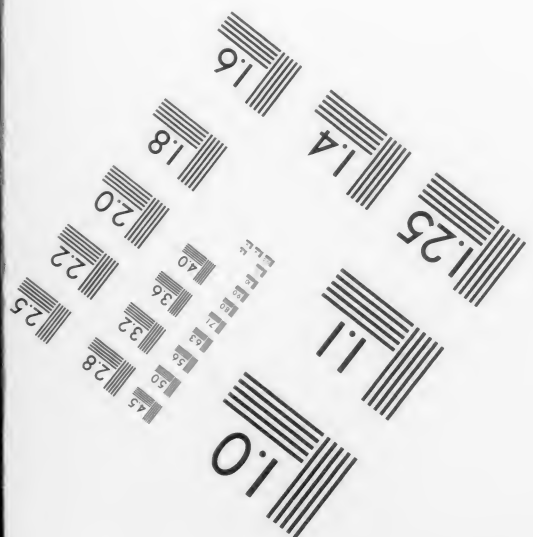
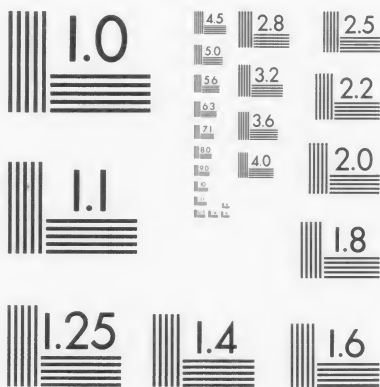
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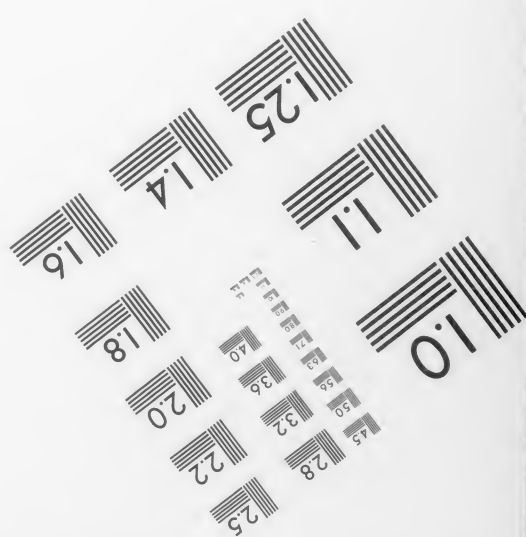
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Prof. J. McK. Cattell

SPIRIT, MATTER AND
MORALS

SPIRIT, MATTER AND MORALS

By

R. DIMSDALE STOCKER

Author of "Sub-consciousness," "Clues to Character,"

"Seership and Prophecy," etc., etc.

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Prof. J. Mc. K. Cattell

Spiritualism and Ethics

Spiritualism and Ethics

INNUMERABLE as have been the forms which, at one time and another, the religion of mankind may have assumed, in reality most, if not all, the faiths appear to be traceable to a common origin. A being of well-nigh infinite yearnings and aspirations, man has ever sought solace and satisfaction in invoking the aid of imaginary powers, alike terrestrial, super-mundane and infernal, as diverse as his own passions. And sometimes, amid the multiplicity of such incomprehensible and incongruous conceptions, it is difficult, not to say impossible, to distinguish the common ground of agreement between them, or to discover whether such exists.

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Whether we betake ourselves to modern or to ancient history, the result which is reached is practically identical: we are called upon to witness a singular absence of anything at all approaching uniformity as regards the selection of such objects of man's adoration.

When, however, we quit the purely objective aspect of this problem, and proceed to review it as a whole, in order to obtain something approaching a synthetic view of such features as it may present, then it is that we discover that the attitude which has all along characterized man must have been well-nigh identical. Almost without exception, we shall find that such faiths have centred in that most inscrutable of all mysteries, death, which the human imagination has invested with a solemnity only equalled by its inevitableness. This, it may fairly be assumed, has acquired significance for man solely for the reason that it came at length to be identified with the

advent of a super-terrene existence, whose features his fertile fancy has at all times done its utmost to picture.

Religion, as Professor James has said, to the vast majority of us is the synonym for Immortality. And the fact that man has been equal at all to contemplating a state of existence over which the terrors of the tomb had no power, however crude such a conception has often proved, must be accounted as one of his most signal achievements.

Upon the whole, the most prevalent form of religion has undoubtedly been the worship of the dead, or communion with the spirits of the departed. Authorities, indeed, are not wanting who are inclined to see in so-called ancestor-worship the prototype of all religion. Assuredly, there would appear to be considerable justification for adopting such a view. Only secondary in importance to the miracle of death itself, is the twin-miracle of godliness. And in

thus associating with the awe of the Unknown the adoration of the Good, man has unquestionably disclosed the essential foundation of his religious instinct. By inclination, as much as by force of necessity, a worshipper, man could not, if he would, fail to identify his vision of the beautiful, the true and the fair, with the immemorial achievements of those whose names tradition has immortalized. Hence have arisen the world-systems which have severally been associated with some one surpassing example of this perfection.

Traces of ancestor-worship may be found in some of the most ancient faiths. In China and Japan it may be said to form the central object of the popular *cultus*. Nor can it be denied that traces of it are to be found among ourselves. The canonization of saints and martyrs, as well as the adoration of the angelic hosts, bears indubitable testimony to the self-same

survival. Furthermore, religion itself, as it is more commonly interpreted, implies reverence for the past; the very practices and customs to which time has lent its sanction almost inevitably acquiring an air of sanctity. To set the time-honoured at defiance is almost in itself a sacrilegious act. To break with the past, even to this day, is accounted by many the most unpardonable of offences. And over and above this, to this very time, we perpetuate the everlasting remembrance of the great: our demi-gods, our heroes, our artists, our poets, and others in our abbeys and churches and elsewhere. Thus does this instinctive tendency in us to glorify and magnify the venerable disclose itself.

This same instinct may assume, however, an almost endless variety of shapes. Sometimes it leads man to indulge in the grossest forms of superstition. Occasionally, too, it exhibits itself in a manner less familiar

than ordinary. One such manner is that which is afforded us in the case of modern spiritualism.

In proceeding to consider this subject, and in attempting to develop the ideas which it will become my duty to embody in the following remarks, let me first of all point out that it will be my aim, as far as possible, to avoid the more controversial aspect of the question. At the outset, it must be confessed, such a topic must, in the very nature of things, open up vast considerations. One is at liberty to speculate and conjecture to practically any extent he may please as to the nature and bona fides of the alleged phenomena. Many, no doubt, would prefer to reject these altogether; some, again, will be disposed to attach a certain amount of importance to them; whilst yet others will be convinced of their absolute reality.

With neither class of persons am

I concerned; for it is not to my purpose at the moment to discuss the possibility or otherwise of the phenomena in question. Those who may already believe in them are not in the least likely to run the risk of having their faith shaken by any process of argument; whilst those who may not have, up to the present, satisfied themselves as regards the authenticity of the alleged happenings are recommended to read Mr. Myers' monumental work, *Human Personality*. If that book do not succeed in converting them to spiritualism, it should at least serve to familiarize them with the claims of one of its most enlightened and cultured champions.

For the moment, all that we are concerned with is the following question: whether, if it be entertained, upon any grounds whatsoever, the belief in "spirit return," or the continued existence of the departed, is

adequate to providing us with a serviceable foundation for a religion. Now, in the first place, let us see what such a belief will imply.

The "Spiritualist" is one who believes, or rather tells us that he knows for a fact, that the "spirits" of his friends and acquaintances still exist, and moreover, that they not only exist, but that they retain the full possession, or even extension, of their faculties, and are further capable, under certain conditions, of communicating with those who are still incarnate in the flesh. What the popular faiths have taught on authority, therefore, it is his claim that he has revealed to him first hand. Either personally, or by means of a "medium," a person whose "psychical development" is adapted to interpret spirit influences, he holds that he is privileged to hold intercourse with the inhabitants of super-terrene regions, whither the spirits of the departed,

he would have us believe, have repaired.

With the credibility of this view I am not immediately concerned. All of us are at liberty to have our own opinions. Many of us may be inclined to consider that at any rate a large percentage of so-called spiritistic phenomena are to be explained on a basis of hallucination, "suggestion" or sub-conscious mental action, whilst others may perhaps be accounted for by the survival of some inherited instinct.

Speaking for oneself, I should certainly in any given instance proceed by a process of exclusion, and should be willing to adopt the hypothesis of "discarnate entities," only when I had satisfied myself that all other explanations were untenable. This, it may be added, is by no means so easy as it might appear.

Constrained, however, as I am to acknowledge that the existence of

disembodied souls cannot possibly be disproved—and whilst, for the sake of argument, one may even be disposed to concede the spiritualist his point—I cannot disguise the fact that (at any rate to myself) his attitude appears singularly inconsistent.

Keeping in view before one Emerson's definition of the spiritual, that it consists in the self-evident, and can be accepted only as a fact of consciousness, and that therefore it is independent of any modes of *appearance* whatsoever, to many of us the "spiritualist's" pretensions must appear strangely at variance with his practice. In the first place, as it seems to me, his whole attitude betokens a fundamental misconception of the facts with which he assumes that he is dealing. Thus, in speaking of himself as a spiritualist, what would he have us understand? What meaning, one would like to know, does he attach to that word?

So far as I have been able to gather, the average Spiritualist is a person who, as a preliminary, proceeds to divide the universe into two equal (or nearly equal) portions: an outer and an inner, a hither part and a thither, or a "fore" and an "aft"—to borrow a nautical phrase.

Why he makes such an arbitrary division I have been unequal to the task of discovering. But so it is.

Basing his theory of existence upon the conception which he has derived (without acknowledgment) from the popular religions, the spiritualist next undertakes to tell us that man is a being compounded of two parts—"a body" and "a soul," the former of which is a mere sheath or instrument. The soul, on the other hand, he would have us conceive of as a kind of "vital principle" or "essence"—a curious little "sort of a something" which, in some inexplicable fashion, contrives to beat and hammer upon

the body, driving the blood through the veins, superintending the emotions and performing every feat of thought or will, and suchlike trifling services.

In dreams, this soul is assumed to work more or less independently of physical assistance, and then it is at liberty to indulge in quite a variety of interesting and extraordinary occupations, or even to wander abroad at its own sweet will. Apart from its bodily habitation, it is usually described as presenting a delicate, attenuated and gaseous appearance. And when at length "death" supervenes, it contrives to effect its escape intact, and thenceforward exists in an "immaterial" state — whatever that may mean.

Now, I would unhesitatingly pronounce this view to be, on the face of it, anything but "spiritual." It argues, on the contrary, the blindest of blank materialism. To begin with, it affords us no adequate definition of the soul,

such as would suffice to distinguish it from a purely material phenomenon. This shadowy, phantasmal something-or-other, when all is said and done, it is easy to see, is no *spiritual* creation at all: but is, on the contrary, a phenomenon patterned upon the approved mundane plan. Nay, it presents not one single property which is not peculiar to matter. It is to be conceived of, so we are told, as having form, magnitude and ponderability. Certainly spiritualists are *under the necessity* of thus describing it; were it destitute alike of body, parts and passions, its mention would be superfluous. But, even as it is, its function and destiny are delightfully bewildering.

Why, for instance, one asks, does it thus disport itself on the material plane? How came it to be gallivanting about in full possession of five senses and a rational mind—which, on the spiritualists' authority, are generally assumed to blur or obliterate

"spiritual" perception? All that our spiritual philosopher can tell one is that it is here in order that it may "gather experience"—although what experience may be worth gaining on so low a plane does not transpire. But, in any case, the upshot of his lucubrations comes to this: that life under existing conditions is a mere interlude in an "immortal existence." What this may mean, I incline to think, one is at an utter loss to imagine.

Now I need hardly say how exceedingly unsatisfactory this view of life, if logically applied, must tend to become. To conceive of the present life as a sort of subordinate or secondary existence, only remotely connected with the essential life of the entity, is to rob it of every possible thing which can make it attractive or desirable from the moral standpoint. To look upon "the everydayness of our common days" as a mere stepping-stone or preparation for some other

state, as it seems to me, must be to lose sight of the fact that every instant is an eternity. Any such theory inevitably tends to carry one's mind away from the very things that are deserving of the attention of all right-minded men and women. And in this way it must be that we miss the essential beauty and worth of the present.

What the spiritualist is apt to overlook, if not to treat with a certain air of contempt, is the eternity of the moment. Certainly, he has a good deal to say about "immortal life," "undying love," "reality," "truth," "justice," and so forth. But what, it may be asked, do these terms really imply? What knowledge, for instance, one would like to know, have we of "life" apart from *death*, or what experience of truth, fact, love, etc., save by means of the gradual evolution of the moral and mental nature during terrestrial existence?

True, this may be partial and incomplete; but how should we, how would the spiritualist himself, fare without it?

The spiritualist has much to say about "progress." The soul, it seems, can achieve progress remarkably rapidly when once it has dispensed with its physical vesture. But, I will put it to any sane, sensible man or woman, to what can such "progress" amount?

All that we can possibly know of progress must come through effort—through the subordination of the physical instincts to the dictates of the understanding and will. How, apart from the body in the presence of temptation which arises in daily experience, can we picture any advance? Take a man away from his environment, and you relieve him of his entire responsibilities. Robbed of these, what is "life"? We may indeed press the spiritualist with the question—

How is this process of spiritual emancipation to be worked through, apart from the conditions with which we are familiar? How different life appears when one is left "to oneself!" What fine resolutions one can make! How "good" one can be. But after all *where is the test*; and without this how may we decide as to the value of any form of existence?

All the knowledge which we have been able to acquire of man's history points to the unmistakable fact that he cannot possibly be extricated from his environment. So far as can be determined, faculty and organism, function and structure, form an indissoluble alliance. Apart from the conditioning of the brain and nervous system, we have no experience of intelligence; and minus suitable opportunities in the shape of the requisite training and experience, we cannot possibly conceive how any kind of mentality may be manifested. To

drag in "guides" and "controls" goes very little way towards helping us. Perhaps we cannot explain "mind" in terms of "matter." But if not, neither can we conceive of mentality apart from its accustomed means of expression.

So far as one can tell, human life is nothing but a bundle of relationships—a series of infinitely complex adjustments; actions, re-actions and interactions. Of any "First cause" behind the scenes we know simply nothing.

What we certainly *do* know is this: that apart from the functions which comprise the sum-total of his organic activities, apart from the exhibition of vital power, intelligence, will and feeling such as are interpreted by muscular and allied movements, we have simply no experience of the phenomenal man. What he may be apart from his body we simply cannot decide; nor if we saw him as he might not inconceivably exist apart from his physical exterior,

could we presumably recognize him. Yet the spiritualist is equal not only to asking us to accept personal survival beyond the grave, but to base an elaborate system of religious faith upon such slender data as his opinion can furnish.

That indeed, as I say man *may* exist under altered circumstances, I should be the last to deny. My readers may think me cautious; I am. But I say emphatically, man as he is, or was, *may* exist for ever. He *may*. We cannot tell. I doubt not that whatever is immortal now will endure everlastingly. At the same time, what has proved immortal in the evolutionary process? Evolution is simply a constant unfoldment of latent powers which bear an indissoluble relation to the immediate emergency. Where is the analogy for "eternity," in the ordinary, loose acceptance of the word? Save the law which fashions and sustains the uninterrupted procession of events, what

"endures?" Does not everything point to diffusion? Integration, disintegration, involution, evolution, devolution—such is the order. Where can we place the "beginning," where the "ends?" Certain functions and powers which were originally possessed or acquired by primitive man and the lower animals are no longer in existence, their necessity having been dispensed with. It may not be true to allege that these are "lost"; rather might it be true to say that they have been incorporated. They may, for aught we know, reappear at some far distant epoch. They may have found a place, so to say, in the memory of nature, and be embalmed in the subconscious storehouse of her illimitable resources. *They may have*: we cannot tell. Here we have, as it seems to me, only the analogies of hypnotism to go upon, and we may easily be entrapped and misled by too hasty generalizations. But, in any case, spiri-

tualist enthusiasts cannot adduce the least particle of proof that these powers are preserved in some species of spiritual pickle.

And the thought presents itself—if *all* are not preserved, why should *any* be preserved? Of what use, one may ask, would any power of which we are aware, with which man is endowed, be in another order of existence?

To say that these powers are superseded by other powers does not much assist matters! Divested of the powers that they already possess, would our friends be the same to us? Assuredly not.

According to the facts of which we are in possession, spiritistic evolution of the ordinary abstract type is not only unthinkable, it would be superfluous. Not the slightest evidence is forthcoming to show that mankind has in any way exhausted the resources which lie at its immediate disposal for mundane advancement. On the

contrary, so far as one is in a position to judge, the race is as yet only in its infancy ; and it is absolutely impossible to tell in what direction the bent of the "soul" may lie. As evolution proceeds, any number of alternatives may present themselves. Then why, we would ask, drag in another life, patterned upon the present ? We know the fate of the old heaven and hell—may not the same fate await the new substitute for these abodes ?

It will be said, perhaps, that it is desirable, if possible, to establish the continuity of life ; and that an after-state, in some shape or form, is necessary to that end. But here, as it seems to me, this difficulty presents itself : how can we ever hope to establish individual survival, according to the usual spiritistic mode of thinking, when, so far as we know, our life, according to the modern estimate, is *not* an individual affair ? The point which I would especially seek to emphasize

is this : *what life have we apart from others ?* If our whole physical and psychical economy is bound up with that of the race as a whole, what business have we to infer that we can accomplish our salvation irrespectively of those who brought us into being ? or how can we possibly retain our personal identity, apart from the race ?

Is it not true that our very existence is not our own to use as we will ? Are we not amenable to laws ? Is not heredity a fact ? Do not our ancestors live in us ? If this be so, and the fact would appear indisputable, may we not infer that we shall, as surely, *live in our descendants*—not miraculously, but by the operation of natural laws ? Nay, may we not herein glimpse the truth that, in us, even now, lies all the promise and potency of the future—a future that is, indeed, not ours individually, but ours in a truer sense ? The thought, I admit, is a tremendously suggestive one. It may well

stagger us, brought up as we have been with our theories of personal salvation in view. But, if it do nothing else, it may at least be the means of bringing home to us the debt which we owe to posterity. And let the fact be taken to heart, that not a deed, not a word, not even a thought, however trivial, but shall re-echo along the march of ages.

The chief dangers, however, with which spiritualism is beset do not lie in its theoretical acceptance. The real trouble lies only too often in the personal attitude which it encourages in the believer. Here we discern, in only too many instances, evidence not only of shallow thinking, but what is far worse, superficial moral philosophy. To keep in view before one an ideal order, and to feel that one is in conscious touch with intelligent and beneficent laws and influences, is not only helpful and inspiring: it is, on the whole, true to human experience,

and as such is to be encouraged and fostered. In all his loftiest and most inspired moments, man has invariably risen to a realization that he was the denizen of a celestial clime—the partaker of a higher life than his unaided understanding enabled him to picture.

When, however, such a conception as this rests upon a theory of a separate and distinct order of existence, the gravest results may ensue. In spiritistic literature much is told us about “higher teachings” which have been communicated to entranced persons, or to those who were under “spirit control.” Yet what, one would like to know, are these “higher teachings,” and what cannot but be the effect of indulging in these abnormal practices? To what deplorable self-deception, to what an amazing amount of unconscious fraud, to what unspeakable folly do not such proceedings lend themselves! Again, how easily this kind of thing may become a means of gratifying

one's vanity. To feel oneself the specially favoured recipient of messages purporting to emanate from William the Conqueror or Shakespeare or Lady Jane Grey, may be exceptionally flattering to one's egoistic sentiments; but is not such a receptive attitude entirely incompatible with spiritual enlightenment? Is the universe around us so devoid of intelligence that we must hunt about in holes and corners for proofs of its existence? How, as Emerson puts it, can the laws of the universe be baulked and eluded by a meddling aunt of the universe for her pets? How much people may be deceived by the fooleries of these supposed spooks! How much invaluable time may be wasted in endeavouring to arrange for their manifestation! As if we had not a completer manifestation of the spiritual ever with us! And when they "appear," what do they say? If report speaks true, little that is of any prac-

tical utility. Of all the innumerable "messages" supposed to have been received from the spirits of the greater thinkers and writers who have "passed over," where is one that will scarcely do anything more than moderate credit to the intelligence of the average "medium" to whom it was "delivered"? Does spiritistic literature, as a rule, give evidence of any greater thought than that which is presumably present in the mind of the average spirit-seeker? When has spiritualism been the means of enlightening mankind upon any problem of serious moment? or when has it contributed to any important scientific discovery?

Such practices, as it seems to me, must be unhesitatingly condemned, on ethical and religious grounds. Nothing, it would appear, is to be gained from them. And more often than not they became the excuse simply for an idle curiosity, if not worse. What can be

more deplorably at variance with common sense and a becoming appreciation for one's moral and mental being, than to pin one's faith upon the ridiculous and absurd statements which so often emanate from "spirit" spheres? And foolish and immoral as such an attitude is, there is an element of physical danger about it as well. The law of suggestion, as we now know, which will account for all such abnormal phenomena, if not wisely recognized, may be attended by the most disastrous of consequences. We need not, therefore, be surprised when some weak-minded individual, with a predilection for planchette or the crystal, who is told by "occult" means that he will shortly fall headlong downstairs, commits the happy dispatch. It might only have been expected. But to make the "spirits" responsible either for the means or the end of the catastrophe, is rather too much for one's gravity.

It is often said by spiritists that one should test one's experience in the light of common sense. Here, I confess, I am at a loss to understand the position. If *common sense* is to be our guide at all why should we depart from it by consulting other means of information? To say that one consults one's judgment and one's conscience should mean that one relies implicitly upon these. We cannot serve two masters. The whole matter, as it seems to me, resolves itself into this: Common sense or authority—which is it to be?

In conclusion, it may be well for me to point out that I am not decrying psychic research as a branch of serious inquiry. Science herself at the present time is faced with any number of unclassified facts; and as the science of psychology progresses, one may confidently anticipate that these will one by one find a place in her domain. At present all that can be done is to

approach such questions with an open mind, which, I may add, is about the last thing that most "inquirers" are prepared to do.

What is to be deprecated is the attempt of the ordinary man to persuade us that spiritualism, if its claims were valid, would afford us spiritual anchorage. This it certainly does not. As a religion it is and must necessarily be lamentably inadequate.

What has Mr. Myers himself to tell us of a ghost? These are his words—

"Whatever else a ghost may be, it is probably one of the most complex phenomena in nature. It is a function of two unknown variables—the incarnate spirit's sensitivity and the discarnate spirit's capacity for self-manifestation."

After such a luminous exposition, what remains, one would like to know, to be said on this aspect of the subject? Is this "function of two unknown variables" to be the rock upon

which mankind is to build its spiritual edifice? Has it nothing better upon which to erect a superstructure?

Assuredly it has. Instead of "spiritualism"; instead of a belief in a split universe, a remnant of the old discarded metaphysic of an effete system; instead of a dualistic theory of life and mind—let man be content to take refuge in "the good life"—in morals. These, wherever they be, in the body or out of it, shall suffice for him who knoweth that whereof he is in search. And thus knowing, he shall dwell in quietude and assurance.

To sum up: Spiritualism has not been without its place in the religious life. In its modern form it has been almost a species of humanism: as such it has registered an advance upon the old faiths. It marks a stage: a rupture with the deity of tradition; it surmounts the old death; it robs the grave of its horrors. But it goes hardly further. This thing it

has done, however : it has established the fact that its followers have begun to search their own souls ; they have at least become human, and are prepared to realize that the memories of their dear ones have meant more to them than the legends which have gathered round the saints and redeemers of old. Spiritualism, therefore, is proof of sincerity. But it does not go far enough. The sundry irrational prejudices and misjudgments with which a belief in it must abound must be removed. And to do this a man must have learned that nothing less than virtue itself will satisfy him. To be on the side of virtue, to have cast in one's lot with righteousness and truth, duty and courage, this it is to have tasted immortality whilst yet in the flesh. For this no "belief," however consoling, is needed : life as it is, or rather as we shall make it, is all that we shall desire.

Materialism and Ethics

Materialism and Ethics

IN his famous "Belfast address," which he delivered in 1874 before the British Association, Professor Tyndall raised the point, "Divorced from matter, where is life?" Continuing, he proceeded thus—

"Whatever our faith may say, our knowledge shows them to be indissolubly joined. Every meal we eat, every cup we drink, illustrates the mysterious control of mind by matter. On tracing the line of life backwards, we see it approaching more and more to what we call the purely physical condition. We come at length to those organisms which I have compared to drops of oil suspended in a mixture of alcohol or water. We reach

the *protogenes* of Haeckel, in which we have a type distinguishable from a fragment of albumen only by its finely granular character. Can we pause here? We break a magnet, and find two poles in each of its fragments. We continue the process of breaking; but, however small the parts, each carries with it, though enfeebled, the polarity of the whole. And when we can break no longer, we prolong the intellectual vision to the polar molecules. Are we not urged to do *something similar* in the case of life? Is there not a temptation to close with Lucretius when he affirms that 'Nature is seen to do all things spontaneously of herself without the meddling of the gods?' or with Bruno, when he declares that matter is not 'that mere empty *capacity* which philosophers have pictured her to be, but the universal mother who brings forth all things as the fruit of her own womb'? "Believing as I do in the

continuity of nature" (he concludes), "I cannot stop abruptly where our microscopes cease to be of use. Here the vision of the mind authoritatively supplements the vision of the eye. By a necessity engendered and justified by science, I cross the boundary of the experimental evidence and discern in that matter which we, in our ignorance of its latent powers, and notwithstanding our professed reverence for its Creator, have hitherto covered with opprobrium, the promise and potency of all terrestrial life."

Divorced from matter, where is life? Although, during the course of the past thirty years or so science has made gigantic strides, the question is still as pertinent as ever. Indeed, it may truly be said that every advance which has been made in scientific research has but contrived to throw still further emphasis upon what would appear to be the indissoluble union of function and form, organization and faculty.

Professor Tyndall's words, however, appear to strike a note of warning. As one reads and ponders over them, one seems to be conscious of the fact that he was only too well aware that what is popularly termed "materialism," is exposed to the grossest misconception. It is bearing this fact in mind that I must beg leave to preface the following remarks with one or two observations.

Without in any way attempting, then, to discuss the weighty question as to what "materialism" actually is (since that would naturally lead us into a controversy over the constitution of matter), I would point out that, in its philosophic connexion, the word is about as far removed from the popular conception as any term well could be. Every now and then we shall do well to consider, as far as it may be possible for us to do so, whether we are not labouring under a false impression begotten by the tyranny of our ter-

minology. This is especially desirable with the word we happen to be considering.

Possibly, upon the whole, no spell is more potent than that which a mere term may be capable of casting over the average mind. One might cite numberless instances of this, where certain terms are so overladen with associations as to have acquired an all-but supernatural significance. Among these words one might include terms such as *soul*, *God*, *death*—neither of which conveys a precisely similar meaning to any two persons.

Now, everybody, or nearly every one, imagines himself to be equal to the task of furnishing a definition of these terms. Indeed, in all probability, so confident is he that he deems any definition to be altogether superfluous. Herein lies the danger. For untold ages it has been man's invariable custom to distinguish between what have been known, for the sake of conveni-

ence, as "matter" and "spirit" respectively. And, sanctioned by immemorial usage, these words have at length proved the most prolific source of confusion and superstition. Unmindful of the fact that they cannot legitimately be retained, save in a symbolic sense, one is still tempted to employ them in a wholly ambiguous and misleading manner.

With many professedly rational persons, even now, as Professor Tyndall suggests, "materialism" is rarely spoken of save in a contemptuous fashion. And in the eyes of not a few it is to this day regarded as nothing but a gospel of dirt—a veritable synonym for denial and unbelief, if not implicit atheism.

The reason which may be assigned for this hostile attitude is by no means so obvious when one comes to think of it. The doctrine, as it is generally expounded, it is true, is not an especially inspiring one; nor has it often,

at any rate in its cruder form, appealed more successfully to the philosophic than the devotionally-minded. Nothing is, however, more apparent, upon reflection, than that the prejudice which is usually shown to materialism is traceable in reality to the survival of monastic and puritanic traditions. As we shall presently see, materialism is in no respect essentially immoral, nor is its acceptance necessarily incompatible with a true appreciation for man's higher nature. So far from being so, in its more philosophic aspect it is distinctly calculated to promote man's spiritual interests.

Materialism is no modern gospel. Upwards of 2,000 years ago a certain school of Greek philosophers, headed by Leucippus and Democritus, founded what is known as the "atomistic theory." According to this view, the explanation of life and existence was sought in the aggregation and segregation of ultimate material particles.

Everything which exists, so it was held, has been brought into being by the collisions and combinations of the atoms to which the collisions gave rise. In this manner, it was contended, we may account for the origin and development both of suns, planets, vegetation, animal and human life ; whilst, according to Democritus, the same process will also account for sensation, thought and self-consciousness. In effect, though with some modification (since the ultimate nature of the atom is now a matter of controversy) this view is substantially identical with that which has been accepted by most of our leading physicists and biologists, and notably by Büchner and Haeckel, both of whom are prepared to trace alike physical, mental and moral phenomena to the evolution of "world stuff."

Into the details of this system of thought I cannot at the present moment delay to enter ; but I would advise

my readers, if they have not already done so, to acquaint themselves with that most masterly exposition of scientific "monism," *The Riddle of the Universe*. In this work the whole question is not only admirably set forth, but ably defended by the author.

Now, to most of us, so mechanical a theory of life and mind as this, which seems to exclude alike design, purpose or chance, and is therefore meaningless to many, appears particularly unpromising. Apart altogether from certain theoretical difficulties which its acceptance involves, and which the lay mind is incompetent to appreciate, the majority are instinctively repelled by the arbitrary attempt which, as they inform us, these philosophers make to invest "matter" with thought, will and feeling. Is not this idea, they would ask, inconsistent with itself ? These attributes, we are told, are not appropriate to matter at all, and have nothing in common therewith, but should be

dealt with exclusively by the metaphysician. By what right, then, have Professor Haeckel and his colleagues proceeded to deal with them from their standpoint ?

A good deal, no doubt, may be urged in this way. It may be said, for example, that *mind* or consciousness and "matter" are really antithetical, and that both are mutually preclusive concepts. Thus, whereas "matter" is objective and may be perceived by the senses—handled, tasted, seen, etc., and has the properties of inertia and extension; *mind*, on the other hand, presupposes a perceiving subject, and implies thought, self-consciousness and will, all of which are *immaterial*. Hence it may be urged, and from this point of view correctly enough, that the mere attempt to argue the matter after the manner of the "monist" is inadmissible, and betokens confusion of the respective provinces of philosophy and science.

So far, it must be confessed, the domains of science and philosophy have lain, from sheer necessity, far asunder. And for her part, science has certainly proved herself utterly unequal to the task of bridging the hitherto impassable gulf between "matter" and "mind." But however rash they may be, this at least must be allowed, that Professor Haeckel and his disciples are to be congratulated upon the step which they have taken. Unless one is greatly mistaken, this monistic conception of life and mind is destined, within a very short space of time, to completely revolutionize the unwarranted assumption that there can be any *fundamental* difference, at any rate, between matter and spirit.

With the negative conclusions of the material school of thinkers we need not here concern ourselves. If, as I pointed out in the first chapter, it is impossible to affirm aught of the Infinite, still less can we bring our-

selves to adopt an attitude of denial. Neither God, creation, nor immortality need receive rejection at our hands. On its constructive side, despite the pessimistic conclusions of its opponents and critics, monism has, however, not a little to offer us. It is to this aspect of the problem that we may profitably address ourselves.

Quitting the realm, then, of speculation and conjecture, and entering the region of every-day experience, what do we discover to be the facts of the case? Briefly, very briefly, this: that throughout the entire Universe which man has explored, from the moneron to the man, from the tiniest protoplasmic cell to the planetary system itself, intelligence and matter are found to form an inseparable alliance—that instinct, tendency, feeling, mind and will all bear the closest approximation to form, structure and function. Given matter of a certain grade and quality, and we

are instantly led to infer a particular order of psychic property. According to Professor Bose, even metals give evidence of a certain kind of responsiveness or "irritability" when a given stimulus is applied. Hence it is the refractory razor, whose user has subjected it to too great an exertion, if put away for a time will regain its edge; the "fatigued" metal gradually becoming normal again.

The reciprocal relationship in which "life" and "form," or "spirit" and "matter" may be said to stand to one another, appears to be the more completely established the higher up the scale of evolution we proceed. The more complex the function the more elaborate the organic structure. Thus do we see that what was once regarded as senseless "dead matter," is no longer thinkable. Within matter itself lies every potency and possibility of growth and development.

"If," remarks Dr. H. Maudsley,

"the subtilties of organic processes did not far exceed the subtilties of observation and exposition, it might be possible to read and interpret mind in co-related structure and co-related structure in mind—the cat's mind in the cat's structure, the sheep's mind in the sheep's structure, the monkey's mind in the monkey's structure, and every human mind in the features of its special bodily structure. Give the tiger the sheep's foot and tooth, and what would become of its fierce and destructive proclivities? Give the sheep the tiger's tooth and claw, and how long would its inoffensive meekness last?"

We are left to infer from this remark, not only that such weapons of offence and defence were developed in response to the animal's requirements, but that the very nature of the creature is interwoven with its bone, muscle and the very texture of its flesh: in short—that for all intents and pur-

poses, function and physical organization and faculty may be regarded as so many aspects of a single fact.

Nor, strange to relate, in spite of their pretensions as "spiritual" philosophers, have those who have striven to present us with a super-terrene world proved equal to the task of dissociating their lofty conceptions from some order of materiality. No matter how thin it may be worn, "matter" still invades the territory of the most spiritual of spheres. Thus one finds our theosophical friends dealing in "astral bodies" and "mental planes," which are most appropriately deemed as supplementary adjuncts of the alleged exalted exhibitions of consciousness with which such folk profess so extensive a familiarity. Whether such states of consciousness and their respective "planes" exist, is beside the point. All that we need note is—that the human mind is driven to the extremity of postulating "matter"

as well as "spirit" wherever the attempt is made to make its thought intelligible: object as well as subject, in short, being simply inseparable from our mode of thinking.

And yet, in spite of this exceedingly obvious fact, hosts of people still delight to discourse to us of "mysterious, invisible spirit influences," for all the world as though such "powers" and "forces" could float about in space, independent of any human relationships. How common it is for these good people to tell us that worship and adoration should be directed to an abstract "Intelligence," to Wisdom, or to Power, or to Love—totally oblivious of the fact that such words mean practically nothing unless they are applied to powers interpreted in human intercourse and experience!

We still, it seems, find it easier to affect a vague "belief" in the superiority of the "mind" over the "body," than to realize the reciprocal relation

of the one to the other. Numbers of people appear to find very little difficulty in swallowing the monstrous and demonstrably fallacious assumptions of Mrs. Eddy, but how many are willing to rely upon a sane view which would seek to subordinate the life to rational principles, such as would lead them to justly discriminate between mental and physiological states? What is the use of fancying oneself in paradise when one's digestion is disordered, and all that is needed is a little judicious dietary? Where is the sense of talking about the "power of the will" over the stomach, when the only safe course to pursue is to face the fact that all that is necessary is to employ one's rational faculties a little more in the selection of a more digestible menu? Can self-hypnotism, I would ask, take the place of common sense in such matters, and can we afford to substitute a course of reading of *Science and Health* for the

properties of good wholesome food and fresh air?

In these days, very much is said about "thought control." People have laid firm hold upon the notion that somehow, in some "occult" fashion, the human mind is creative. What this term may mean they have perhaps no very precise idea, but they are under the impression that they have only *to will*—to tense their muscles and corrugate their eyebrows (a curiously material proceeding, by the way) and *hey presto!* all that they wish will come to pass. That there is more than the proverbial grain of truth in this must frankly be allowed. The mind can, and doubtless does, influence the body enormously, often to a surprising extent. Indeed, the power to initiate effort, and to direct and control the lower emotions and animal functions, would appear to be the supreme test of manhood. What, however, these people are not so ready to

realize is this: that the mind itself can act only in so far as adequate means are provided for its doing so: only, in short, *as a suitable brain and body* enable its potentialities to express themselves.

You and I may contemplate the possibility of accomplishing any number of wonderful things. The higher we aim the better. But, unless we are willing to ensure the appropriate conditions, we shall fail utterly to compass our ends. As Browning sings—

Let us not always say—
Spite of this flesh to-day,
 I strove, made way, gained ground upon
 the whole.
 As the bird wings and sings,
 Let us cry all good things
 Are ours, nor soul help flesh more now
 than flesh helps soul.

Professor Huxley has well observed—
 "changes in the condition of the brain matter are the invariable antecedent of all states of consciousness." By

precisely what means these changes are effected we may not presume to say: but that there is a complete coincidence between mind and brain is certain. And this much at least is established beyond the possibility of doubt or question: that apart from the molecular changes which occur in the brain, we have no experience of volition, thought or feeling. The connexion, however, between the physical and the psychical is even more intimate than this. Besides the brain, the body itself is the most potent agent in promoting mental vigour. Apart from organic and functional integrity, soundness, normality and morality must be nothing short of impossible. To be holy, in the true sense, means little more than to be whole, complete, and entire. To this end mind and body must be mutually supplementary.

The paramount importance of diet, the laws of heredity, climate and

environment, it is now coming to be seen, cannot be over-estimated. And both the degenerate, the criminal and the feeble-minded, it is found, are they whose bodies, as well as "souls," are feeble and defective. If it be true that "of the soul the body form doth take," no less is it a fact that of the body the soul receives its means of manifestation. We may be inclined to place the responsibility, in the first instance, upon the soul, and to assign the unsatisfactory state of affairs to the violation of the laws of hygiene and personal morality. However that may be, things must be taken as they are found. And so long as no improvement is wrought in the body, no change will be effected in a man's life.

It is for this reason that our modern social reformers are coming more and more to rely upon physical and intellectual discipline. For long ages, man's moral and spiritual nature was sought

to be captured by way of the emotions. We are at length finding a more excellent method. Instead of preaching at mankind, we are beginning to teach that cleanliness, the advantages accruing through education, and exercise, cannot be over-estimated, and that when these things are mastered man has a serviceable foundation for his "higher" activities. Thus far has "materialism" won its way.

To come now to another aspect of this question, which is not without its ideal bearing. We do not, I think, sufficiently recognize the moral and rational *tendency* (it is no more) which is exhibited in Nature.

As often as not relief or even recovery from many forms of psychic disturbance may be secured if only *rest* be taken. The medical faculty are coming to see this. By relieving the system from extreme tension and stress for a while, in nine cases out of ten, a man will regain his normal

state. To what would this appear to point? To this fact, simply: that resident within the organs and functions themselves lies the power whereby equilibrium may be secured. Half the time, with our theories, and creeds, and fads, we are but meddling with the health-promoting processes of nature. If only we could persuade ourselves "to let well alone" more! And the same is true of our mental and moral life. If only we trusted more to the good, and strove less against the evil, what a sweet, serene atmosphere our presence would engender!

By entering this plea for the inherent intelligence of the material principle, I would not lead my readers to suppose that I am concerned with advocating for one instant a go-as-you-please philosophy. To do that would be utterly subversive of my intention. Life, to be real, must needs be earnest, must be made worth the striving after ;

must *include*, not *exclude*, all that is most distinctively human in its nature. At the same time, I would suggest that the time has arrived when men should disabuse their minds, once and for all, of the notion that nature is an ass and must be driven. "Blind brute force" does not exist. If science is showing us anything, it is this, that intelligence inheres in the whole, and in the part no less than the whole. Thus is being accomplished the transfiguration of matter. Each physical, mental and moral operation of which an individual may be capable presupposes an effort on his part to relate himself with certain physical as well as mental and moral conditions. Yet, in another, and perhaps a truer sense, such acts are *intelligent*, and bear especial reference to the subjective or inner life. Thus is the old materialism insensibly merging itself in a new, and higher (because more practical) idealism.

All that now remains for us to touch

upon is, how may materialism, if adopted, be said to affect the ethical life? Has it any bearing upon religion? Can it, if embraced, affect our spiritual aspirations?

Suppose, for the sake of argument, that the non-philosophical view of evolution which is sometimes preached turned out to be the whole truth? It is not *probable*, perhaps—no more probable than the doctrines which are taught by the spiritualists. But suppose that the only life we were destined to live were the life we already know. Assume, for argument's sake, that no future state awaited man: that by some cataclysmic or similar catastrophe he were to be snuffed out of existence altogether—would he be at liberty to live the life of the brute, or to protest that he had no need of his ideals? Assuredly not. Whether or no a future state be in store for him, be his fortune here or elsewhere pleasant or the reverse, the moral law must

must *include*, not *exclude*, all that is most distinctively human in its nature. At the same time, I would suggest that the time has arrived when men should disabuse their minds, once and for all, of the notion that nature is an ass and must be driven. "Blind brute force" does not exist. If science is showing us anything, it is this, that intelligence inheres in the whole, and in the part no less than the whole. Thus is being accomplished the transfiguration of matter. Each physical, mental and moral operation of which an individual may be capable presupposes an effort on his part to relate himself with certain physical as well as mental and moral conditions. Yet, in another, and perhaps a truer sense, such acts are *intelligent*, and bear especial reference to the subjective or inner life. Thus is the old materialism insensibly merging itself in a new, and higher (because more practical) idealism.

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still be his stronghold and rock of deliverance. No greater blasphemy against human nature was ever uttered than by the writer in the Epistle: "if the dead rise not, let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Have we, I would ask, nothing better to choose between than faith in some remote personal beatitude or a life of sensual indulgence? Is there no alternative left to us? Have we no sense of our present responsibilities, no regard for our mutual needs, no interest in the great life which surges about us? Shall not this great physical world bring us to ourselves? If not—what can? And let it not be that we blind ourselves to the stupendous facts which such a conception involves.

Let us be sincere on this point. If we are, we must acknowledge that the worth and the meaning of life, so far as they can be said to exist for us, will depend upon a full recognition of the facts before us. To shut our eyes

to these must be to miss practically every spiritual opportunity.

In conclusion, I have little to add but this, that whilst it may be open to criticism, materialism is not necessarily opposed to ethical religion. Why, as Professor Huxley has asked, should the fact that we have descended from a pithecoïd pedigree diminish our divine right of kingship over nature? Why indeed? How should mind, even if it were proved to be a function of matter, be any lower on that account? However "crass" he may be, the materialist is perhaps on safer ground than the spiritualist. He may profess to know less: he may earn, and be entitled to, the name of "sceptic." At least, if he is sincere, he will have laid hold on truth as he sees it—and that, however humble a thing, may serve his purpose better in the long run than the theories and dreams of those who, knowing not, protest that the light is with them.

Rational Ethicism

Rational Ethicism

THERE are certain words which, to the minds of many people, may be said almost to suggest a distinction without a difference. Unless I am much mistaken, the words *Rationalism* and *Ethics* afford us with an illustration in point. For perhaps the generality of persons who are unacquainted with the essential aims of ethical religion, Ethics and Rationalism are practically synonymous terms.

For several generations, Rationalism, at any rate with ourselves, if not elsewhere, has been a rock of offence—a veritable danger signal, suggesting a deplorable departure from the ordinarily received standards of re-

ligious orthodoxy. And somehow, an erroneous impression appears to have obtained currency—at any rate, among the more unthinking—that Ethicism, when all is said and done, is nothing but a species of diluted free-thought—a kind of attempt to establish secularism upon a respectable footing, with a view to consulting the susceptibilities of those whose concessions to good taste may have forbidden them from following in the footsteps of the late Charles Bradlaugh and Mr. Foote.

Very many people, one fears, to judge from what one is told, entertain some extraordinarily mistaken and exaggerated notions regarding the doctrines of those who are constrained to preach and to teach the gospel of ethics. And among such unfounded impressions may be instanced the exceedingly mischievous, albeit prevalent opinion, that one is concerned merely with seeking to undermine the

foundations of such religious institutions as are already in existence, and has no better object in view than to perpetrate sundry unjustifiable onslaughts upon what are received as the most holy and sacred objects of men's faith. Never, surely, was a more palpably fallacious opinion entertained. If ever man came not to destroy but to fulfil, assuredly that man is he who would expound the doctrines of ethical religion. To imagine, moreover, that such an one is in any wise committed to any set of tenets by which it is sought to supersede Christianity, must be totally to misconceive the spirit of the religion in question. If one would lay especial emphasis upon one thing more than another, that thing is the inward life and light considered upon their own intrinsic merits, i.e. the life of unconditional self-surrender to those august ordinances which have their origin in the human breast, and which are to be regarded as the only source

of every good and perfect thing in heaven or earth.

I will assume, therefore, that all who happen to have followed me thus far must realize that the charge which is sometimes preferred against ethic-ism—to the effect that it is necessarily anti-theistic or agnostic—is as untenable as it is unwarrantable.

At the same time, whilst, in a measure, ethics and rationalism may stand for two distinct modes of thought, presenting as they do certain antithetical features, in another sense these terms may be held to bear a similar, if not identical, import, inasmuch as they carry us to two departments in man, viz. the moral and the rational, whose mutual indebtedness no student of humanity can question. If only we can once make up our mind to divest such terms of the unfortunate associations which have gathered about them, and are but willing to interpret them in their legitimate sense, we shall

not only fail to discover any necessary incompatibility between them, but we shall find them to possess a positively supplementary value.

But now, first of all, let it be that I avail myself of the present opportunity for making the candid admission that rationalism, in the popular acceptance of the word, presents several unattractive features. Only too often the rationalist poses before the world as a "materialist" of the deepest dye—as an individual of the Gradgrind type, from whom every vestige of emotion and imagination have departed: as a being, in short, who has surrendered every right save that by which he contrives to obtain a reputation as a fact-gathering machine. Rationalism of this sort assuredly leaves not a little to be desired, and every ethicist has a perfect right to object to its being identified with ethical religion. To cultivate the intellect at the expense

of the feelings, or the emotions, and above all the moral sense, is indeed a mistaken course to pursue ; and not the least among its countless disadvantages is that it tends to engender a sceptical, if not bigoted attitude of mind. Certainly, in justice to him let it be said the rationalist oft-times appears to belie his creed, and is by no means invariably the mental monster that he is painted.

At the moment, however, we are not concerned so much with the rationalist in his capacity as a human being, but with his habit of thought. That his reputation, at any rate, is an unenviable one cannot be gainsaid. Similar allegations, however, have been brought against ethicism. When he wrote his famous essay on the *Sovereignty of ethics*, Emerson pointed out, and with no little justification, that the religion of rectitude is accounted but a sterile chimney-corner philosophy, and that ethics are adjudged incapable of satis-

fying the affections. The criticism is still pertinent. So befogged is the popular intelligence, that it still seeks religion only in supernaturalism and revelation, and fails to find in simple, unadulterated moral teaching anything but bare intellectual propositions or metaphysical abstractions. As if the soul of ethicism did not lie in the application of practical principles !

Perhaps it will be objected by some that the methods of ethicists are not always beyond reproach. Very possibly something is to be said for the views of those who hold that moral culturists do not sufficiently grip the average life, or appeal to the popular intelligence. Perhaps it will be said, too, that this attitude of which we speak is somewhat remote and aloof from that of the man in the street. If so, all that can be done is to take the criticism to heart, and to reconsider the question.

But be that as it may, the main con-

tention remains unaffected. And, in seeking, as is done by ethicists, to lay especial stress upon the human factor in all affairs and relationships of life, at least the aim that is proposed must be accounted a worthy one.

In directing attention to this fact, I would not fail to point out that what we may define as the practical aspect of rationalism proposes for itself a similar object. If only one is ready to dispossess his mind of foregone conclusions and prejudices, he cannot but observe not alone a singular parallelism between the claims of rationalism and ethics, but what may be regarded as a mutually complementary aspect between them. Thus, whilst ethics would seek to inspire man with a love of the good, and would transport him to the very stairs whereon he may ascend the throne of righteousness, no less would rationalism arouse in him a reverence for the true, and seek thereby to encourage

that strict intellectual sincerity which must lie at the root of all genuine progress, material or otherwise.

Contrary to the prevailing opinion, then, I would defend the asseveration that ethicism appeals primarily to the emotions; and that, whereas rationalism is directed more particularly to the cultivation of the intellect, ethical religion is an affair of the soul—a “principle of life possessing the whole imagination and heart.”

In one respect, no doubt, the twain are inseparably allied. Yet, for the purposes of discussion, at any rate, one cannot keep too clearly in mind the twofold aspect of the problem which underlies them. To divorce either from the other, in practice, as we shall presently see, is a disastrous mistake. Apart, however, from a correct appreciation for the distinction which is implied between mental culture and emotional and spiritual, or moral, growth, we shall be liable to misappre-

hend the entire problem. This, alas ! has only too often been done, and with the direst of consequences.

Having, then, this point clearly before us, we may very pertinently proceed to inquire as to the reciprocal relationship in which ethics and rationalism may be said to stand. In doing this we should not, I think, lose sight of one exceedingly important fact, which is this: that, in effect, human life is one incessant process of rationalization ; since it is in *consciousness, self-consciousness, thought, will and reason*, we find the secret of man's supremacy in the universe. Notwithstanding the fact that such progress presupposes infinite emotional capability, the higher forms of human life suggest to us a gradual but effectual attempt to subordinate alike inorganic, vegetable and animal life, as well as man's own instincts and feelings, to a sense of universal law.

And in enunciating this statement

one does not leave out of account the attitude of the religionist any more than that of the scientist himself.

Whether the label "rationalist" be adopted or not, the "higher," or *human* life of every intelligent man or woman consists in one prolonged attempt to adjust itself to an order which is, relatively speaking, rational. As Sir John Seeley pointed out in his eloquent and powerful volume, *Natural Religion*, the votaries alike of science and religion have this much in common: both claim a sense of relationship with a higher order of intelligence than their own personality can be said to include. Whether this be spoken of as *God*, as *Nature*, or as "something not ourselves that makes for righteousness," it makes practically little difference: a conception of Law, of Intelligence, to which one's inmost being is adapted to react in some degree, is involved. And this is the important point. When, how-

ever, one carries one's mind back retrospectively to the innumerable inhuman and brutal deeds and theories which have disfigured the process which has distinguished man's ascent, one feels how just was the comment of Professor Huxley: "Whatever Linnæus may say, man is not a rational animal." In truth, man—man as we know him—is not wholly so, as yet. Nevertheless, despite his shortcomings, his poor performance, his failures, within him he has at least stirred a something higher than himself, "a tendency to God"; so that one is even tempted to feel that some of his foulest achievements may have been inspired by an inward touch of nobleness, prompted by a dawning distinction between good and evil, which has been the means of exposing him to further assaults, trials and temptations, in the meeting and overcoming of which his conscience and sense of responsibility have developed.

Here, however, we may pause in order to make some attempt to realize the untold influence which man's reason has at length brought to bear upon his actions. Unless man had gradually accustomed himself to check his uncontrollable desires and emotions by dint of deliberation and forethought, he could not possibly have climbed to his present position. Emotion alone could not have effected his emancipation. Admitting, as we well may, that man is inherently moral, nothing short of experience *plus* reflection could have possibly placed the means at his disposal for progressing thus far. Nobody with the slightest acquaintance with anthropological research can possibly persuade himself that even that transcendently sublime faculty, conscience, is in itself sufficient to ensure full blown perfection. As we now know, this power, in common with many more, has been conditioned and limited in its range according to

man's training, experience and environment. Indeed, so true is this, that if manhood may be conceived of as depending upon it, no less must conscience be regarded as the product, the function, of organic development. A supernaturally imparted "conscience" never has enabled, and we may be very well sure never will enable, man to reach the perfection of holiness. To conscience, almost as much as to fanaticism and ferocity, one may refer innumerable atrocities; among them the "holy" wars, the massacres and the infernal iniquities of the Inquisition. It may, indeed, be doubted whether, at any time, human advancement has been promoted as much by the "conscience" as by the natural decline of the animal impulses and the subsequent growth of reason.

Perhaps, however, one distinguishes almost too readily between "rationality" and "conscience." More and more, as time has gone on, have the

meanings which we have come to attach to these terms tended to approximate. And though our religious training has favoured in making us regard them as separate and distinct, who does not practically identify a conscientious with an intelligent deed or individual? To be insincere, to dissemble, to cheat, or to commit murder would be to expose oneself to a charge of folly and defective judgment just as surely as of moral obliquity. We are rapidly passing beyond the stage when we can afford to consider the various departments of human life as separable and isolated. On the contrary, we discover ourselves to be dealing, under any circumstances, merely with given aspects of a fundamental entity, or *ego*, whose nature ramifies in any number of unsuspected directions.

But in thus identifying morality with the rational nature, we shall do well to extend the scope of our inquiry

somewhat, otherwise we shall fail to grasp the problem in its entirety. For countless ages the unquestioning acceptance of traditional opinions has blinded men to some of the most important facts, among which that of the true essence of the spiritual life must be accounted the chiefest. Until quite recently this was supposed to consist in almost anything save the free play of the inner nature. Only very recently have rational questions acquired a spiritual significance at all. Until the last decade or so the very terms "spiritual" and "rational" were assumed to be mutually exclusive. Wherefore it behoves us to recognize what we are about when we attempt to effect a reconciliation between them.

To this day there are many people who are found to entertain the decidedly novel opinion that man is in possession of two distinct natures—a lower and a higher; and, further, that whilst it is his duty to check and

restrain the former, he is at liberty to allow himself, in some mysterious fashion, to be dominated by the latter.

From one point of view this may be correct enough. Most of us, by being conscious of some ancestral taint or inherited weakness, find ourselves in possession of certain habits and instincts of which we would willingly rid ourselves. To suppress these is certainly our bounden duty; and one may even allow that the surest manner by which to correct a lower emotion, is to appeal to—substitute for it—a higher.

To conclude, however, that we are justified meanwhile in eliminating the rational mind, is as immoral as it is absurd. An example or two will suffice to illustrate this. How common it is to hear people, who affect to embrace "the gospel of love," hasten to tell us that the golden rule comprehends every conceivable duty of man. To love God and one's neighbour, we are

assured, is to fulfil the whole law and the prophets : man has no spiritual life apart from love, and to realize universal brotherhood is the only thing that remains for him. Now, whenever I overhear anybody talking in that strain, I am always led to wonder one of two things—either whether they are perfectly sincere, or whether they are entirely conscious of the monstrous nature of their pretension.

In one respect, undoubtedly, love is the prime element in life. To burn with kindly emotions, to be tender, compassionate and wax sympathetic with the suffering, to pity the afflicted, is not alone admirable : it is natural. But at the same time it is *not* everything. There may be—there *is*—room for more love in the world. I do not doubt it for one instant. There is also room for more of other things : as, for instance, more good sense, more reflection, more reason, more wisdom ; and upon the whole, one is inclined to think that the

latter commodity would prove distinctly more serviceable in the long run. Has the thought never occurred to any of my readers that love, tenderness, sympathy, and indulgence may be responsible for as much misery and suffering in the world as callousness, indifference and cruelty ? Beautiful as it may be, the love-policy promises distinctly better than it could ever prove in practice. If it could be lived up to consistently throughout, such a doctrine might not be without its compensations, I am ready to allow ; at the same time, the whole idea is so utterly inconceivable that we forbear from any discussion of the Utopia to which such a vision gives rise.

So far as experience carries us, sympathy and love are by no means the universal solvent for ills, either human or inhuman, though so far as we are in a position to discover, they have been awakened by the sight of suffering. Moreover, were this said suffering to

cease, we cannot conceive of the necessity for the existence of love. Whether it could exist in heaven, we would not undertake to say. But this much is certain, that, taking the world as we find it, sympathy, *plus* a modicum of common sense—in other words, sentiment directed by reason—would appear to be the most practical remedy for human afflictions. As it is, the mere impulse to be “kind” is only too often mistaken for a “divine attribute.” It is nothing of the kind. To say a pleasant word, to do a generous deed, even if it cost us little, may not be a bad thing. It is not, however, necessarily any criterion of character. To be *good*, a man must be just and intelligent, compassionate and sensible. Thus, by a happy combination of intellect and feeling, he may lay some claim to moral approval.

Another illustration showing the mistake which arises from dissociating ethical and rational values may be

seen when we approach the hardly less-extolled virtue, faith.

That faith has its legitimate functions and uses, even in this professedly rational era, must be apparent to the average observer. Though supernaturalism may have declined, confidence and trust are still as necessary as ever between man and man; indeed, it may truly be affirmed that faith between two human beings is, if anything, a fairer and more beautiful thing than the faith which our forefathers reposed in the supernatural providence.

Yet to what lengths may not misapplied faith even now go! How much misled people may be by suffering themselves to be influenced by blind belief. What can be more lamentable than to divorce faith from discrimination? to trust to hearsay? to give credence to the lightly uttered word? to heed ill-considered trifles? Yet how the habit grows on one!

What need there is for greater reason, for forethought ; how quickly one's mind may be contaminated by accepting statements merely on the authority of another. Then again, into what superstition unrestrained credulity may lead a man. How many people who boast of their unorthodoxy believe in "luck," in charms, and fortune telling, and quack advertisements, which derationalize and disorder the mind and disgrace our twentieth century intelligence into the bargain.

When one witnesses the unspeakable follies to which such superstitions can lead man, one is sometimes sore tempted, rationalist that one is, to exclaim, "Would that the old faith, for all its supernaturalism, with its sincerity and steadfastness of purpose, were again a living force among men."

But as things go, no revival of the old need be anticipated ; nor, on second thoughts, should it be desired. The surest remedy for the follies of this

or any other hour, after all, lies not in the uncritical acceptance of any beliefs (modern or ancient), but in the critical attitude which it behoves every man to adopt towards the practical duties of life. Mother-wit, which, as Emerson pointed out, is the surest remedy for false theology, is no less the only safe cure for profane credulity. Thus knowing, and with wisdom and experience to guide us, we have nothing to fear.

In bringing my remarks to a conclusion now, I would reiterate my plea for an awakened sense of the stupendous responsibilities which are committed to human keeping.

As the moral life is not something that admits of being conceived of as separate and detached from our conscious existence, so we must realize the necessity for earnest and deliberate thought upon every question which may engage us. Unless high resolve and lofty purpose be translated into terms

of intelligent action, no progress need be looked for, and as a matter of course, moral death must inevitably ensue.

It may not be, it cannot be, that virtue, courage, temperance, chastity, equality, serenity, faith and humanity, owe their origin to the brain, and are the mere by-product either of molecular changes or some "intellectual process." These things lie deeper; they are organic, the florescence of man's very self; the divine emanation proceeding from his soul; the express image of his person. Whatever they may be, or may not be, they are not to be dismissed by introducing any conception of the human mind to subordinate them to which would be to profane and desecrate them.

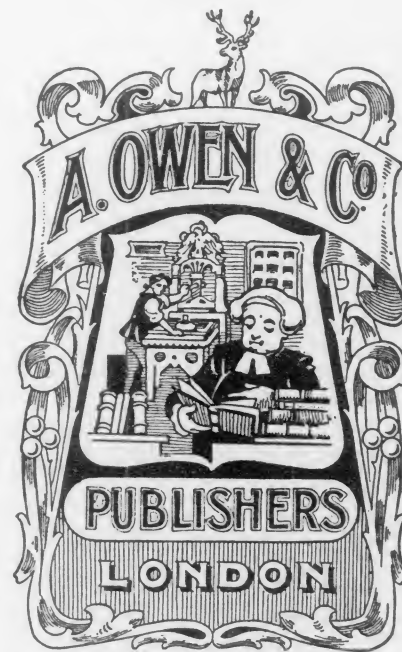
For all that, these "promises of a wider bliss" will become a man's priceless possession only when he has been willing to obtain an intelligent comprehension of the principles which underly human life, physical, mental

and moral. Only as spiritualism, materialism and rationalism fuse in ethical monism, and the laws of life are interpreted with reference to moral purpose, can the full satisfaction of the soul be reached, and the heart's desire be attained.



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
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